7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

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2:Edmonds T-3 (1926?) 1927 E13 Balkan Peoples
Albania E61

A Railway Line

As no-one but myself wanted to go on to Tirana I was put with the mails into an ordinary four-seater Ford car and continued the journey alone save for the driver. The country was well wooded with oak, ash, poplar, willow and alder. The fields were enclosed with hedges of bramble and, but for the big wild fig-trees, I might almost have been in England. I had been told that I should find in Albania no bank, no water-closet, and no railway, but as regards the railway I found this statement incorrect, for a narrow gauge track ran at the side of the road most of the way from Scutari to Tirana. It did not, however, appear to have been used for a considerable time as it was in bad repair and much broken. At one place, half-a-dozen little locomotives, dismantled and red with rust, stood idle on a siding, while in a ditch a short distance away lay a seventh—a pathetic corpse in a winding-sheet of bramble and convolvulus. Presumably the line was wrecked by the Austrians when they were in retreat at the end of the war. I should not imagine that it would be a very costly matter to put it into working order again.

The impression I received in the course of this drive was that the surrounding country was exceedingly fertile, and that much which is at present uncultivated could be made productive if modern agricultural methods were adopted. In all countries the farmer and tiller of the soil—conservative to the backbone—is slow to admit that his way of doing things can be bettered, and to this general rule the Albanian agriculturist is no exception. He knows nothing, and wants

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To the Land of the Eagle

OOO night owing to the prodigious snoring of my room-mate. I have never heard such an organ-pipe of a snore, or such an alarming accompaniment of grunts, wheezes, and explosive noises of every imaginable kind. To make matters worse—if anything could have been worse—there was a stork's nest on the corner of the roof immediately above us, and the storks replied to the sounds beneath by clashing their beaks like a watchman's rattle.

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The snorer, I afterwards discovered, was an Italian visiting Valona in connection with war-graves—or that at least was the ostensible reason of his presence. Personally I think he was a political agent.

Valona, which is a town of considerable size, has an Italian look, and owes, indeed, much both to Italian and to Austrian influence. The Austrians occupied it for some time during the war. It possesses a light railway which is still in partial use, though to what extent and for what distance from the town I was not able to ascertain.

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To the Land of the Eagle

496 has it no railways, but the country is so mountainous Not only and the population so small and so scattered that without a considerable subsidy from the State a railway could not be made to pay and is therefore a remote possibility. For this reason it seems likely that Albania will miss the blessings—or escape the degradation (whichever way you prefer to put it)—of industrialism, and remain an agricultural nation.

361 The town has a few smart-looking European shops, as well as one large semi-wholesale store, but for the rest it resembles other Albanian and Turkish towns with streets of cobblers, streets of blacksmiths, streets devoted to saddle-making, harness-making, rope-making, and so forth—all the various trades being segregated, and carried on in the conditions of confusion, dirt, and squalor which are a legacy 524 from the middle ages. In addition there are many cafés, full from early morning to late at night with men who appear to have nothing better to do than sit there playing cards and 458 backgammon. I commented on this fact and was told that it was a sign of bad times and the very serious economic situation of the moment. For this—as for the similar situation in Montenegro—the practical closure of the United States to immigrants is to a large extent responsible. [167] In the past the States have supported a floating population of 40,000 Albanians to whom their own country offered no prospect of remunerative employment; to-day most of these men are at home with nothing to do.

000 I was often asked about Australia, and whether some scheme might not be arranged by which entry would be